

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of configuring computer-based communication, said method comprising:

obtaining respective user identifiers appropriate to identify a user of a computer to each of multiple communications applications accessible with the computer; and

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providing on a display screen of the computer a graphical user interface associated with said computer-based communication, wherein the graphical user interface includes representations of said multiple communications applications.

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2. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising, in response to user selection of a first one of the communications applications, connecting the user to the application to establish a first session, wherein the connecting includes providing a corresponding previously-obtained user identifier to the application.

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3. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said obtaining user identifiers comprises receiving entry of the identifiers from the user.

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4. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said obtaining user identifiers comprises accessing previously-stored user identifiers.

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5. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising obtaining respective passwords appropriate to allow access of the user to each of the multiple communications applications.

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6. The method as recited in claim 5, wherein said obtaining passwords comprises accessing passwords previously stored on the computer.

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7. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising communicating the user identifiers to an additional computer.

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8. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising forming a programming object or class including the obtained user identifiers.

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9. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the multiple communications applications include an application selected from the group consisting of: electronic mail application, instant messaging application and internet chat application.

Abstract

10. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said providing a graphical user interface comprises providing a window indicating a status of each of the multiple communications applications.

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11. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said representations of multiple communications applications comprise respective icons.

Figure 9

12. The method as recited in claim 2, further comprising, upon receiving instructions from the user, joining the first session to a second session established by connection of the user to a second one of the communications applications.

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13. The method as recited in claim 12, wherein said joining comprises immediately transferring messages received in the first session to the second session.

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14. The method as recited in claim 13, wherein said joining further comprises immediately transferring messages received in the second session to the first session.

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15. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

identifying all of the communications applications accessible with the computer;
and

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determining a status of each of the identified communications applications.

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16. The method as recited in claim 15, wherein said identifying and determining comprise determining a status of each communications port within the computer.

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17. A computer system, comprising:

a display screen;

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means for obtaining respective user identifiers effective to identify a user of the computer system to each of multiple communications applications accessible with the computer system; and

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means for providing on the display screen a graphical user interface associated with computer-based communication, wherein the graphical user interface includes representations of the multiple communications applications.

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18. The system as recited in claim 17, wherein said means for obtaining and means for providing comprise a communications aggregation program stored on a storage medium accessible by the computer system.

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19. The system as recited in claim 18, wherein the communications aggregation program is adapted to access a data structure including the user identifiers.

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20. The system as recited in claim 19, wherein the data structure comprises an object or class in an object-based programming approach.

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21. The system as recited in claim 18, further comprising application programs stored on the storage medium, wherein the application programs correspond to the multiple communications applications.

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22. The system as recited in claim 21, wherein the application programs are adapted to receive corresponding user identifiers from the communications aggregation program.

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23. The system as recited in claim 22, wherein the communications aggregation program and the application programs adhere to a common application programming interface.

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24. The system as recited in claim 17, further comprising means for identifying all communications applications accessible with the computer, and for determining a status of each of the identified communications applications.

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25. A computer-usable carrier medium, comprising:

first program instructions executable on a computer for obtaining respective user identifiers effective to identify a user of a computer to each of multiple communications applications accessible with the computer; and

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second program instructions executable on the computer for providing on a display screen of the computer a graphical user interface associated with said computer-based communication, wherein the graphical user interface includes representations of said multiple communications applications.

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26. The carrier medium as recited in claim 25, wherein the first and second program instructions are within a communications aggregation program stored on the carrier medium.

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27. The carrier medium as recited in claim 25, wherein the first program instructions are further executable to obtain the user identifiers by accessing a data structure.

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28. The carrier medium as recited in claim 27, further comprising the data structure.

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29. A computer-usable carrier medium, comprising a data structure storing a set of user identifiers effective to identify a user of a computer to each of multiple communications applications accessible with the computer.

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30. The carrier medium as recited in claim 29, wherein the data structure comprises an object or class in an object-based programming approach.

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31. The carrier medium as recited in claim 29, wherein the data structure further stores passwords corresponding to one or more of the user identifiers.

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32. The carrier medium as recited in claim 29, wherein the data structure further stores a name referring to the user identified by the user identifiers.

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33. The carrier medium as recited in claim 32, wherein the name further identifies an object or class in an object-based programming approach.

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34. A computer-usable carrier medium, comprising first program instructions executable on a computer system to implement a first communications application for the computer system, wherein the first program instructions are adapted to receive, from a communications aggregation program running on the computer system, a first user

identifier identifying a user of the computer system to the first communications application.

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35. The carrier medium as recited in claim 34, further comprising second program instructions executable on the computer system to implement a second communications application for the computer system, wherein the second program instructions are adapted to receive from the communications aggregation program a second user identifier identifying a user of the computer system to the second communications application.

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36. The carrier medium as recited in claim 35, wherein the first and second communications applications and the communications aggregation program adhere to a common application programming interface.

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37. The carrier medium as recited in claim 34, wherein the first program instructions comprise a wrapper or shell program enabling a third party communications application program to interact with the communications aggregation program.

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38. A method of configuring computer-based communication, said method comprising:

- claim 1

obtaining respective user identifiers appropriate to identify a user of a computer to each of multiple communications applications accessible with the computer;

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providing on a display screen of the computer a graphical user interface associated with said computer-based communication, wherein the graphical user interface includes representations of said multiple communications applications;

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storing the obtained user identifiers in a data structure; and

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communicating the user identifiers to an additional computer.

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39. The method as recited in claim 38, wherein said storing comprises forming a programming object or class including the obtained user identifiers.

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